THE

RAGGED SCHOOL UNION MAGAZINE.

"Think, for a moment, ye who lavish wealth
On selfish luxury and useless pomp,
On those forsaken children of distress,
Whom no kind hand has rescued from the gulph
Of misery and crime. Ay, look around
On those poor friendless victims, swarming still
In each dark haunt of penury and guilt,
Without one object or a hope in life;
Trained up by human fiends to deeds of shame
The squalid, starved apprentices of sin." AGNES STRICKLAND.

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ADDRESS TO OUR READERS.

WITH the close of the year 1854, the sixth Volume of the Ragged School Union Magazine is completed; a work which was commenced for the twofold purpose of awakening and sustaining an interest in an effort, whose especial object is the elevation of the abject and degraded portions of society. That such has been to a great extent realized, is manifest from the fact, that in the six years just concluded, the number of Ragged Schools in London has been increased from 62 to 129, and the scholars from 6,980 to 15,872. The voluntary teachers have increased in the same proportion, while the number of paid teachers has risen from 80 to 280. Such enlarged additions do not, however, indicate the full increase of our efforts, as may be gathered from the fact, that some of the 62 schools in existence six years since, and which at that time consisted of only a Sunday School and Week Day Evening School, have so lengthened their cords, and strengthened their stakes, as now to include separate Day Schools for boys, girls, and infants; Industrial Classes for both sexes; Evening Schools for juveniles and adults; beside Refuges for males and females; and although the Institution embraces so many efforts, it is only counted as *one* among the 129 schools. The funds, also, have of course increased in proportion. The annual expenditure of some of the schools six years since amounted to £100, whereas at the present time it is upwards of £1000. Such "facts and figures," we trust, will be encouraging to our readers, and to the public generally.

Although much has, by God's blessing resting upon these efforts, been accomplished, yet much remains to be done, and which requires the imperative and immediate attention of the philanthropist and Christian. As long as such plague spots as Keate Street and St. Giles's are found in the heart of London, polluting the moral atmosphere, and poisoning all coming within their infectious influence, we must not think of lessening one iota of our efforts, but continue to push forward our parallels, drawing nearer and nearer to the points of attack, till, as in Wild Court, a breach is made, and the fortress falls into other hands, by a successful assault of moral warfare. Such an enterprise cannot but promote man's welfare and God's glory, and consequently deserves the Christian's best efforts and liberal support.

At the close of the year we naturally take a retrospect of the labours of the past twelve months, and somewhat linger upon those points that indicate an extension, a consolidation, a completeness of the work, as well as those that have cost us some anxiety and grief. The year has not passed without its trials and difficulties, its sorrows and bereavements. The devastations of cholera connect it with 1832 and 1849, by which many of our scholars have been brought to an early grave, and which also removed to their reward, some of our much valued teachers and friends. War has added to the number of our widows and orphans; and resources which otherwise would have been applied to help forward our labours, have gone to supply the wants of the bereaved families of our brave veterans, who have fallen while nobly fighting their country's battles. We regret not such an application of public beneficence—we only lament its occasion. The least that can be done is to relieve and comfort the bereaved, and condole with them in their lonely sorrow. We earnestly pray that hostilities may soon and successfully come to a close; our brave soldiers return home to their families; and our people be left at liberty to cultivate personal piety, home affections, and national prosperity.

In the last session of Parliament, three important Acts were obtained; one gives powers for the formation and support of the Industrial School for Middlesex; another enables Scotland to establish Reformatory Schools; and the third provides for the better care and reformation of Juvenile Offenders in Great Britain. It is hoped that by the facilities afforded by these enlightened Acts, our labours will be greatly assisted, and our efforts rendered increasingly effective. We look forward to another year's exertion with increased hope, and with enlarged expectations, feeling assured that so long as we are faithfully discharging our duties, we shall receive the needful support from the public; and that God will vouchsafe to own our labours, and crown them with his abundant blessing.

1, *Exeter Hall, December*, 1854.

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